

For the Guy Who Has Everything

by Syl

Category: Nightwing

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2000-06-20 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-06-20 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 20:39:09

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,267

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

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**\*\*For the Guy Who Has Everything \*\***

**\*\*by\*\***

**\*\*Syl Francis\*\***

**\_\*\*~ / ~ / ~ / ~\*\*\_**

Nightwing dodged, weaved and rolled. The rooftop around him exploded in a rain of automatic gunfire. Sometimes, it didn't pay to get out of bed.

Just another night in Fun Town. He checked the time.

12:30.

Batman would be arriving soon. Time to put an end to this.

Taking off at a run, Nightwing dived off the edge of the Gotham City Stock Exchange. Somersaulting, he spotted the fugitives on the opposite roof. He'd stopped the bank robbery a half hour ago and had been in hot pursuit ever since.

Still tumbling in midair, Nightwing acquired his specialized Batarang. He threw-backhanded-while completing his sixth revolution. Not bothering to follow the Batarang's flight, he shot out a jump line and swung into the night. He knew that his defensive weapon would eject a Nomex triple-weave net at the last moment and effectively tie up the goons.

Or, in this case, 'gift wrap.'

"Does he know yet?" Nightwing asked.

"He's already on the way," Oracle reported. "ETA two minutes."

"That's my cue to vamoose."

Landing lightly on the ground below, Nightwing moved silently through the shadows. A full moon was just beginning to rise. Soon, the night would be bathed in its silvery sheen.

"Remember-mum's the word," he said.

"I know already!" Oracle replied exasperated. "You'd think I couldn't keep a secret," she added under her breath.

He found his 'Wing cycle parked where he'd left it. Mounting it, he donned his helmet and activated the electronic starter.

Grinning, Nightwing spoke into his comlink. "Remember to keep him at least two minutes behind me, otherwise the whole operation will be scrapped."

Hearing a soft intake of breath over his headset, Nightwing realized that he'd pushed her too far. He spoke quickly to forestall her.

"Sorry, can't talk, Babs. Gotta go!" Before she could respond, Nightwing revved the turbos and took off.

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Mary nervously looked around the darkened street. She'd missed her bus. The club manager had asked her to stay late. He'd offered her a ride home, but she'd declined.

"Creep's been after me for weeks now," she muttered. "Yeah, I'll get into a car with him-after I have the lobotomy."

The night seemed to descend upon her. Feeling suddenly as if she were being watched, Mary started walking. The tap-tap-tap of her heels echoed on the concrete.

"This is crazy, girl," she said under breath. "You live fifteen blocks away." In Gotham City no less, she added silently. Keeping fully alert to the shadows around her, Mary moved briskly. A voice in the dark was her first warning of danger.

"Yo, mama!"

Mary stopped startled, her heart beating rapidly. A young man stepped out of the gloom, an amused smirk stamped on his face. A metallic glint on his right hand caught the moonlight.

Mary gasped.

"Please, don't hurt me," she pleaded.

"Hey, mama, we don't wanna hurt you," he said. "We wanna \_\*\*love\*\*\_ you!"

"We?"

The young thug snapped his fingers. Three more toughs stepped out of the shadows and surrounded her.

"No! Please!" she cried. They grabbed her from behind. She struggled uselessly against the overwhelming odds. A large hand was clamped roughly over her mouth, muffling her screams.

"Don't worry, mama," she heard a hot whisper near her ear. "When we're done with you, you'll \_\*\*beg\*\*\_ for more!" The others laughed obscenely and as one began tearing at her clothes, their hands all over her.

"I believe the lady said, 'no,'" a voice growled in the dark.

"What-?" The first thug who'd approached Mary broke away from the group. He was instantly in a defensive stance, his eyes searching the area from where the voice had come.

"It's the \_\*\*Bat\*\*\_, Dirk!" someone said nervously.

"The \_\*\*Bat\*\*\_?" another squeaked. "We gotta get outa here!"

"Chill, Ted!" Dirk said sharply. "I'll handle it." Facing the direction that the voice had come from, he pulled a semi-automatic pistol from his jacket pocket.

"Whoever you are, you'd better reconsider minding your own business." For emphasis, he snapped back the weapon's bolt, chambering a round. "My buddies an' me don't like interference."

A large, black object suddenly struck his wrist. He cried out in pain, his numbed fingers dropping the weapon. Two of his friends rushed up to him. The third one, Ted, dragged Mary to a nearby alley.

"Dirk! Whassup, man?" one asked.

"Something hit me, JC," he gasped. "Something black-"

"D-Did you say, 'black'?" JC asked in a small voice.

"The Bat-?"

"No, but the next best thing." Nightwing stepped into the silvery light of the full moon. He smiled. In the eerie moonlight it looked more like a predator's snarl. It was enough for two of the thugs. They immediately turned and ran.

"It's the Bat's kid!" and "He's just as bad!" Their panicked shouts echoed in the empty street.

They didn't get far. Nightwing whipped out two of his throwing disks. As they struck the fleeing muggers, the disks adhered themselves to

their clothing, and a pulsing green light started flickering.

"Argh! What **\_\*\*is\*\*\_** it?" one yelled, trying to yank it off his jacket. He found out. An electrical burst, ten times more powerful than that of an average stun gun, shot out in a brief display of white/blue lightning.

The two muggers froze in their tracks, jerking violently as if they'd just stuck their hands in a wall socket. They soon toppled over, unconscious but unhurt. The non-lethal weapon attacked and neutralized the victim's nervous system, which affected their voluntary muscle control. They were only stunned, however.

Nightwing faced the two remaining muggers. He almost felt sorry for them.

"Your turn."

It was over in less than a minute. Nightwing quickly trussed up the unconscious thugs and left them for the 'clean-up' crew.

He found the mugging victim hunched over in a recessed doorway, her clothing ripped and disheveled. She was sobbing quietly.

"Hey, miss," he said softly. "It's over. They won't be bothering you anymore."

She nodded, but didn't move from where she huddled, shivering. Nightwing tentatively reached a comforting hand out to her and gently touched her face.

She gasped involuntarily, jerking her head away at his touch. Looking up at him, she blinking rapidly. The tears soon followed and she reached her arms to him.

Nightwing picked her up and carried her to where he'd left his 'Wing cycle.

"Wh-Where are we going?" Mary asked fearfully.

"I'm taking you home."

"I-I'm not very good at swinging from rooftops," she managed.

Nightwing smiled, putting her down. "That's 'cause you've never tried it." He took out a palm-sized device and pressed a hidden button. His 'Wing cycle's headlights and motor activated immediately.

"But, I guess we can go by more 'conventional' means," he added. He handed her a spare helmet and put his own on.

"Are you **\_\*\*really\*\*\_** the Batman's son?" she asked fearfully. Nightwing didn't reply. "I-I guess you'd rather not say. That's okay," she added. "I don't like to talk about my family, either."

They roared through the silent Gotham City night, the only conversation when he asked her for her address. At last, they pulled up in front of her apartment building.

"By the way, my name's Mary," she said, shyly. "Thank you." She returned his helmet. As he was about turn away, she laid her hand lightly on his shoulder. "My mother died when I was very young and my dad and I never got along. I left home when I turned eighteen. I haven't talked to my dad since."

Nightwing sat on his motorcycle without speaking, letting her finish what she wanted to say.

"I-I thought I could make it on my own. But tonight-?" she choked. "Tonight I realized how much he'd taken care of me. That when he yelled at me, it was because he loved me. He wanted me to go to college, but I wanted to be a singer." Tears started falling.

"Some singer. I'm the opening act in one of the worst dives in the whole city and the manager keeps trying to-well, you know." She brought her hand up to her eyes. "I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I know it's so stupid-"

"No," Nightwing said, getting up. He stood next to her, close but not touching. "It's not stupid. I didn't get along with \*\*my\*\* father for several years, either. And it's only recently that \*\*I\*\* realized that when he yelled at me, it wasn't because he didn't love me, but because he only wanted what was best for me."

He touched her softly on the cheek.

"Mary, our parents can't live our lives for us, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't let them \*\*be\*\* a part of our lives." He smiled ruefully. "I didn't want to go college either. And I didn't want the nice, safe life that he had mapped out for me. I wanted to be who \*\*I\*\* am." He grinned self-effacingly. "Not exactly the smartest or safest lifestyle, admittedly, but it's who I am. And he's grown to accept it, even respect it."

Mary looked at him with hopeful eyes. "But how did you-?"

"We talked. Not easy when your dad happens to be the World's Greatest Closed Mouth-"

"I thought \*\*my\*\* Dad had that title," she said. They grinned in mutual amusement.

"But \*\*I'm\*\* the one who left home," he said. "So it was up to me. I picked up the phone, and...we talked."

Mary looked away, suddenly unsure.

"But it's different with me. When I left, I said a lot of unforgivable things-"

"I did, too." He looked at her. "But here I am." He leaned down and kissed her lightly on the cheek. "It's up to you, Mary. And tomorrow may be just the perfect day to do it, too." He climbed on his motorcycle. "Good luck," he said and roared away.

Mary stood in the moonlight a moment longer, watching his retreating taillights. Tomorrow? She wondered. What was special about tomorrow? She smiled suddenly.

"Tomorrow \*\*is\*\* the perfect day," she said, happily bounding up her stairs.

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Three robbery attempts, five muggings, and at least one suicide attempt later, Nightwing again checked his watch.

4:30. This being Gotham City, the night was still young.

He was crouched on top of his favorite 'roosting' spot, one of the gargoyles that jutted out from the Gotham Cathedral. It afforded a spectacular view of the city below. He sighed.

"How does he do it?" he asked. "Night after night. All by himself?"

A tired yawn answered him. "You'd know better than anyone," Oracle replied sleepily. Nightwing shook his head.

"Even when I was his partner I didn't understand it," he said. "I mean, he \*\*never\*\* took a night off-unless he was too injured to climb out of bed. That's when Alfred would put his foot down."

He scanned the twinkling lights below, adjusting his Starlite scopes to filter out the neon display.

"I remember lying in bed during a school night, worrying that that would be the last time I'd see him. Asking God to take care of him. Then the next morning, I'd wake up and find a note next to my math homework, telling me to check this or that problem again." He laughed softly. "He'd come in after being out all night on patrol, and he'd check my homework. Can you believe that?"

"Do you miss working with him?" Oracle asked.

"Yeah, but I know that we'd just clash, and all the old wounds would open up again. Still-" He stopped and swallowed. "-I \*\*do\*\* miss the times we spent together."

"Hold on a sec," Oracle said sharply. "I'm receiving reports of gunfire over by the waterfront. Nightwing, it sounds like a full-fledged gang war has just erupted there. I'm sorry, but I'm gonna have to call Batman in on it. It's too dangerous for you to handle alone." She waited for a response.

"Nightwing? Nightwing!"

Nightwing was already flying across the rooftops on his way to the waterfront. He heard Oracle raising Batman on the comlink. A few minutes later, his motorcycle was racing through the graying Gotham streets. The barest hint of dawn just lightening the skies.

"Sorry, Batman, but tonight's on me!"

A dead end loomed before him. He didn't have time to go around. He was headed straight towards a ten-story building. On impulse, he pressed a button on his handlebars. A grappling hook instantly shot out. He gunned his engines just as the grapnel latched onto the

building roof.

Pressing another button, the motorcycle's front end suddenly left the road and for a split second he was riding on one tire. About to slam into the building, the motorcycle shot straight up.

Nightwing rode the 'Wing cycle' up the side of the building. Reaching the roof, he released the grapnel and shot across the rooftop to the other side. Seeing that he was about to run out of roof, Nightwing revved the turbos to even higher RPMs, aiming for the next building.

Rider and motorcycle shot across the narrow space between rooftops.

Five minutes later, he was in the waterfront district. He'd leapfrogged across six more buildings in the same reckless manner.

"No wonder Batman used to yell at me," he muttered. "If I were \*\*my\*\* kid, I'd yell at me, too."

Nightwing parked the 'Wing cycle on the rooftop nearest to the waterfront. Hearing gunshots below, he sprinted to the edge and leaped into the breaking dawn.

Spotting a light pole, he shot out a jump line and swung to the ground, landing in the middle of a vicious firefight. He was instantly targeted by multiple gunmen.

Oracle was right. Too many for him to handle alone.

"Ah, yes," he said to himself, as he dodged and somersaulted. "But when one has his handy-dandy Bat-toys, he is never \*\*truly\*\* alone." Grinning, Nightwing took out a handful of pellets, and leaping in the air, threw them in all directions.

Gracefully, but with a speed that surprised the rival gunmen, Nightwing tumbled in the air, landed and executed a series of handsprings until he finally reached an alley between the warehouses.

He looked back. The dawn was strangely silent. He could hear a few coughs and weak cries of protest where only moments before a war was being waged. The sounds of water lapping against the wharfs could be heard nearby.

"Awwww. Did we all forget to bring our gas masks?" he tsked. "No telling when someone will use knockout gas. Be prepared, I always say."

"Is \*\*that\*\* what you always say?"

Nightwing executed three handsprings and was about to assume a defensive stance when he stopped. Taking a deep breath, he gave Batman a sheepish grin.

"Hey there, partner. What, uh, brings you here?"

Batman stepped in closer, a dim silhouette outlined by the new

dawn.

"I could ask you the same question," Batman growled.

"Well, funny you should ask-" Nightwing began.

"But I won't," Batman continued. "I won't even ask about the three dozen or so thugs I've found, bound and gagged, scattered throughout the city. \*\*My\*\* city!"

Nightwing stared at Batman. This was not going the way he'd envisioned it. Unable to match his mentor's glare, he looked down. He suddenly felt like he was nine again.

"And I don't think I even \*\*want\*\* to know about a certain blue and black motorcycle I found parked on a \*\*rooftop\*\*!" Batman added.

Nightwing's eyes widened at this. He swallowed. His shoulders slumping, he nodded.

Batman stood unyielding, his cape closed around him.

"You've taken a lot of reckless chances tonight, Nightwing. You never once reported in and let me know that you were in the city. You \*\*know\*\* better!" The Dark Knight took another step closer until he was nose-to-nose with his former protege.

"This isn't Bludhaven, Nightwing. You grew up here. You \*\*know\*\* what Gotham City is like at night. How dangerous it is, even for me." He stood to his full height.

Nightwing remembered how he'd have to crane his neck all the way back when he was just a kid. How intimidated he'd been by the Batman's height. Topping the scales at only five feet, ten inches, Nightwing still had to look up to the over six-foot Batman.

"Well? What do you have to say for yourself?" Batman asked impatiently.

It would be so easy to let the old resentments consume Nightwing. But he couldn't. Not today of all days. He knew that Batman was livid only because he'd given him cause to worry that night. What was it that he'd told Mary?

That his father had yelled at him, because he'd only wanted what was best for him? And because he loved him.

Nightwing held Batman's eyes a moment longer. He remembered the times they'd fought side-by-side, and the times they'd poured over evidence together. He recalled the countless times he'd been forced to stay behind, and the many times they'd discussed a particularly difficult case over breakfast.

He remembered the happy times, and the angry times. And in the end, he remembered what today was all about. Smiling suddenly, he answered Batman's question at last.

"What do I have to say for myself? That it's all \*\*your\*\* fault, of course!"



"My fault." Batman made it a statement, rather than a question.

"Well, yeah. I mean, you've gotta admit that you're not an easy man to shop for."

Batman's eyebrows shot up. "Shop for-?"

"I mean," Nightwing continued, "I've had a really hard time trying to think of what to get for the man who has everything! So, I figured, what better than a bunch of unhappy crooks all nice and gift-wrapped for the World's Hardest Working Dad?

"Dad-?" Batman asked.

"You know, so that you could take the night off," Nightwing explained. "Of course, you'd never dream of taking the night off," he added disgustedly. "So instead of this being a nice Father's Day gift for you, it's given you a hissy-fit-"

"Father's Day gift?" Batman repeated softly.

Nightwing blinked, realizing that Batman was actually listening to him, if a bit bemusedly. Smiling broadly, he clapped both hands on Batman's shoulders.

"Happy Father's Day, Batman!"

\_\*\*The End\*\*\_

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**\*\*Author's Note:\*\*** \_I looked over the story in FFN and was (un)surprised to find the formatting a bit messed up. Soâ€¦I thought I'd just take a moment and repost it. (Oct. 2012)\_

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